

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

31 January 1985

Mr. David Brinkley
ABC News
1717 De Sales Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear David:

In your 27 January telecast, you said that CIA asked for ABC's television licenses to be revoked because of a news broadcast CIA "disliked."

I know this has become the media's conventional view of what our complaint to the FCC against ABC was all about. I'd like to have you personally understand that this is not quite true. CIA's complaint to the FCC was not an effort to punish the network merely for broadcasting a negative report about CIA activities. Rather than disliking the broadcast, we were outraged at being falsely charged with attempted murder without a figment of evidence or credible allegation.

The concern we expressed in the complaint was for ABC to correct the deficiencies that led to giving millions of Americans false information about CIA. We hope this will, in some orderly way by FCC rulemaking, lead to standards that would better protect the network, the public and CIA against recurrences of the rush to publish without decent prudence or adequate checking and verification.

During months of direct dealings with ABC officials, we tried to persuade them to reinvestigate their story, which was almost totally false. We asked on a number of occasions that ABC make internal inquiries like those CBS conducted in the Westmoreland case and to retract all the mistaken reporting to set the facts straight for the viewing public.

ABC consistently refused to respond to our requests and only reluctantly "clarified and updated" a small part of its story--which wrongly accused the CIA of plotting to murder an American businessman--while it stood by the rest of its unsubstantiated report. As far as we know, it has not even properly investigated the largest parts of the broadcasts. When left with no other recourse, we filed a complaint with the FCC urging it to look into ABC's spurious reporting and take all action necessary to protect the public interest.

That is all there is to it. Media attention has been diverted from ABC's refusal to address or correct the falsehoods it broadcast to the world in a series we believe it had reason to know was inaccurate to the charge that CIA is attempting to silence ABC.

Sincerely,



William J. Casey